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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study done to better understand teacher leadership as it is currently practiced in public schools. The study was an exploratory one, consisting of three case studies of teachers who hold leadership positions within their schools. Each of the teacher leaders played a distinctly different kind of leadership role; worked at a different level in the K-12 system; worked in a different kind of educational setting from rural to suburban, and existed in a uniquely different context. This paper briefly reviews the framing questions of the study (e.g., What is the nature of the lead teacher's work? What are the constraints and supports of their positions? How are teacher leaders selected and evaluated? Next, a summary is presented of the literature on teacher leadership, following which the case study methodology is discussed and the data sources described. A "snapshot" description of each of the cases studied is then provided, the findings are reviewed, and the implications for both rhetoric and real practice are discussed. In general, it was found that these teacher leaders were constrained by their lack of time, by the original conceptions of their roles, and by the egalitarian ethic in teaching. In all cases, administrative support was crucial. Implications for further research are briefly discussed. (JD)

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# "Lead Teachers and Teachers Who Lead: Reform Rhetoric and Real Practice"

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Recently, across the country, those interested in educational reform—policy makers, academicians, researchers—have been calling for new roles for teachers as a means to improve the quality of public education. While a long history of reforming schools exists in this country, teachers and teaching have seldom been considered central to the discussion. It is in recognition of this previous oversight, that the reform discussion is currently focused on teachers. The rhetoric of this new reform calls for greater leadership opportunities for teachers in hopes that such changes will help to attract and retain top-quality teachers, while simultaneously improving the quality of educational experience for students.

The current rhetoric calling for new leadership positions for teachers emerges out of research which comes from a variety of perspectives. Teachers appear to be victims of reform rather than meaningful participants in the improvement of public schools. To begin, changing educational practice is an enormously complex effort which, more often than not, is oversimplified by reformers. This oversimplification has made substantial change impossible for practitioners. (Sarason, 1976) Teachers continue to face large numbers of students, fragmented and overburdened curriculum, and inappropriate assessment measures. And they do so by using the least effective instructional methodologies because these are the ones with which they are the most familiar. (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984) Furthermore, teachers continue to work in impoverished conditions, with inadequate resources, and with ever more unwilling partners. (Lortie, 1975; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Cohn, et. al. 1987) In the last fifteen years, the bureaucratic systems in which teachers work have become more regulatory which has decreased teachers' abilities to make decisions on behalf of their students. (Wise, 1979; Goodlad, 1987; McCloskey, et. al., 1987) In addition, research done on issues related to teacher supply and demand indicate that another serious teacher shortage is upon us. These shortages, caused by the greying of the American teacher workforce, by the women's movement, and by the civil rights movement, have also helped to focus attention on teaching and the need for improvements in professional teaching practice.

Two major reports highlighting the topic of teacher leadership have brought this issue to the forefront of the educational reform discussion. These reports, "Teachers for the 21st Century" (Carnegie, 1986) and "Tomorrow's Teachers" (Holmes Group, 1986), both call for more various roles for teachers which would provide teachers with greater opportunities to influence both practice and change in public schools. They suggest "lead" positions in which teachers would mentor their colleagues, teach courses, make curricular decisions. They suggest that teachers should have the opportunity to participate in a staged career, that they must be more integrally a part of the restructuring of schools. These reports inspired a great deal of discussion on teacher professionalism and its possibilities in the midst of current practice. Shouldn't teachers be more involved



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in setting the standards of their professional practice? Shouldn't teachers design the training and the induction of novice teachers? Shouldn't teachers be involved in the codification of their own best practices? Shouldn't they convey that information to their colleagues through the conduct of inservice and continuing education courses? (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Soder, 1986; Sykes, 1987)

While these and other questions are very important to the discussion, what is missing is the voice of practitioners—the teachers for whom these roles would be created. The fact that teachers voices are so absent from the conversation surrounding teacher leadership creates a number of complications. Because teachers have been left out of the dialogue of the need for such positions, it is unclear whether practitioners actually believe that the creation of "lead" positions would be at all helpful. A second complication stems from the fact that leadership positions for teachers have been in place in our schools for a number of years. Teachers have historically functioned as team leaders, department heads, and, more recently, as staff development trainers and curriculum specialists. In addition, teachers provide leadership for their colleagues on a number of committees—from textbook adoptions to school improvement. Because the distinction between the new roles and those which currently exist is not carefully delineated in the reform rhetoric, many practitioners believe that this circumstance represents one of the central problems facing public education. The rhetoric of reform seems ignorant of the current conditions of practice. As a result, those who study education in hopes of improving practice, and those who practice education in hopes of better educating students have little influence on one another.

Currently, there is little information available on the leadership positions which teachers hold. A handful of studies, which will be discussed in more detail a bit further on in this paper, indicate that numbers of teachers are effected by these roles and that they appear to be problematic. (See Hatfield, et. al., 1986; Porter, 1986; Lieberman, et. al., 1988; Dierks, et. al., 1988) Because of the lack information about these roles, it is genuinely difficult to know whether the new roles are significantly different from those which exist, what problems exist in their creation, and how effective they are. It is also difficult to determine whether the existing roles serve the intended purposes of teacher leadership—to attract and retain excellent teachers, while simultaneously improving the quality of education for students.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a study done to better understand teacher leadership as it is currently practiced in public schools. The findings from this study provide helpful information needed to bridge the gap between the reform rhetoric and current practice.

## THE STUDY

This study was an exploratory one consisting of three case studies of teachers who hold leadership positions within their schools. Each of the teacher leaders played a distinctly different kind of leadership role; each worked at a different level in the K-12 system; each worked in a different kind of educational setting from rural to suburban; each was a current member of the National Education Association; each existed in a uniquely different context. As part of each case, four colleagues of the teacher leader were interviewed at each site.

In an attempt to summarize the study, this paper will briefly review the framing questions of the study, summarize the literature on teacher leadership, discuss the case study methodology used, and describe the data sources. It will then provide a snapshot of each of the cases, review the findings, and conclude with the implications for both rhetoric and real practice.

## THE FRAMING QUESTIONS

Because this was an exploratory study, it was designed to broaden the general understanding of the complexity of teacher leadership roles. In order to do that, the study was guided by a single, framing question: What is the nature of teacher leadership as it currently exists in schools today? A set of subquestions was developed to provide information about the major research question. Some of the questions were directed toward the teacher leaders:

- What is the nature of the work that lead teachers do?
- What are the constraints of these positions?
- What are the conditions which support these positions?
- How do the people who hold these positions define teacher leadership?
- How are teacher leaders selected for leadership positions?
- How are teacher leaders evaluated?
- Does the National Education Association support these positions?
- Do leadership roles add to or detract from teaching?
- Do these roles improve the flat nature of the teaching career?

- Do these roles reduce the traditional isolation in which teachers work, while encouraging greater experimentation and collaboration?

Other questions were directed to the colleagues of the teacher leaders and included:

- What does teacher leadership mean to those teachers who work with those who hold leadership positions?
- What kinds of leadership opportunities exist for teachers in school districts?
- Are the leadership positions which exist supported by the local association, by the district, by the other teachers in the district?
- What kinds of leadership opportunities would most improve practice?
- How should teachers be selected for these roles?
- Do the leadership roles which exist provide leadership for the larger teaching force?

## STUDY LIMITATIONS

While information on teacher leadership as it currently exists is badly needed, the scope of this study is small and limited as a result. Many of the limitations lie in the exchange of breadth for depth. While we know that hundreds of these positions exist across the country, this study covers only three so that greater generalizeability is impossible. Again, while each of the teacher leaders works within a large faculty, only four colleagues were interviewed in order to conduct in-depth interviews. It is impossible to determine whether the responses of these four were representative of the entire staff. Another major limitation stems from the amount of time spent at each site. While descriptive data promised to build the complexity of the positions, two weeks at each site was hardly adequate to observe everything which the teacher leaders did. In addition, it was difficult to determine whether the interactions which were observed were indicative of others of the same nature. For instance, in each case, only one faculty meeting was observed. It was impossible to know whether those observed were representative of others. Thus, the study described here offers a beginning exploration into the nature of teacher leadership as it exists.

## THE RESEARCH ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

A small body of recent literature exists concerning teacher leadership, and it is out of this work that the need for and the design of this study emerges. It includes two surveys which attempt to define teacher leadership as it currently exists, and several case studies of the effects of leadership roles. Collectively, these studies clarify what we do know about existing roles and what remains to be uncovered.

A study done by Hatfield, Blackman, Claypool and Master (1987) indicated that 10 to 20% of the teaching staff held leadership roles or were identified under some 50 different titles. The newest roles are those of master teacher, grade-level chair, and staff-development specialist. The oldest roles are those of consultant and department chair. Less than half of the teachers surveyed were provided with release time, while two-thirds of the teacher leaders received some compensation. Teachers in these roles tended to hold multiple assignments, to lack concrete job descriptions, and to lack training. The majority were selected by administrative appointment. They identified important skills as the ability to deal with people, communicate well, to be flexible and patient, to be competent and well respected. Teachers surveyed noted that relations with principals were often difficult and that they lacked a power base or any formal authority. While a majority of their work concerned staff development, the more focused the role, the more successful it appeared. The authors concluded that despite extensive use of these roles, they have not surfaced as significant to educational improvement.

A second survey done by teachers was designed to add to the information gained by the Hatfield, et. al study. (Dierks, et. al., 1988) Findings from interviews conducted with seventy-one teachers indicated that teachers who hold leadership positions within school districts tend to have between 16 and 20 years of experience, and are well educated. Seventy-five percent of the teachers interviewed held advanced degrees; fully half had master's degrees. These teachers noted that a good deal of their responsibility required committee meetings and that relatively little of their time was spent working with other teachers on issues related to classroom teaching.

Many of the roles these people held were informal and voluntary. When they were asked to indicate what changes would be needed for teachers to function as leaders, time was the predominant answer. Interviewees indicated that they needed access to information which was difficult to get in hierarchical systems, that they needed leadership training, and that they needed more general knowledge of school finances, school law, multicultural education, current educational research, change processes, and participatory decision-making processes.

Several other studies focused on particular kinds of teacher leadership roles. Because of their narrowed perspective, these studies relate a great deal about the benefits and the problems with such roles. Porter (1987) investigated the effects of a position which involved half-time research at Michigan State University's Institute for Research on Teaching coupled with half-time public school teaching. The University wished to bridge the traditional gap between classroom practice and university-based research.

Five teachers were selected through an application process to work half-time at the University for an average period of three years.

Teachers who held these positions reported greater intellectual stimulation, reduced isolation, the distance to become analytical about their practice, and an increase in both their personal confidence and their commitment to the profession. On the other hand, teachers also reported that splitting the job between their school and the University was stressful, that they did not have enough time to do all that was required in both workplaces, and that administrators in their school systems paid very little attention to their university-based work. Porter's study provides a snapshot of one leadership position which seems to have strong personal benefits for those involved, but which does not spread benefits to the larger teaching force. In addition, it is unclear whether the gap between the University and the schools was successfully spanned. The experiment appears to have worked for the place holders, while the larger school community remained unaffected.

Lieberman Saxl, and Miles (1988) studied seventeen teachers in the New York School System who held extended positions in individual school buildings. Their study, a series of case studies, focused on what people did when they assumed newly created extended positions designed to assist other teachers. These positions were formal positions in that they were negotiated between the teachers' union and the administration. Selection for the positions was done by the union. Teachers who won the positions were on full-time release and were assigned to a building. They were not assigned to buildings in which they had taught previously.

The authors found that all of those who were selected for these positions worked in a variety of ways—the jobs were partially created by the school context—and, as a result, the leaders found it necessary to learn a variety of leadership skills while on the job. In addition, participating teacher leaders learned about teacher isolation, school cultures, and the egalitarian ethic amongst their colleagues. All mentioned that their greatest challenge was to break into the school culture. Because they had not worked collaboratively before, the teacher leaders were able to isolate several categories of skills they needed in order to be effective with their colleagues. Those skills were:

1) Trust and rapport building

2) Organizational diagnosis

3) Dealing with processes

4) Managing the work

5) Building skill and confidence in others

Characteristics of these new roles included the necessity for placing non-judgmental value on providing assistance, on modelling collegiality as a mode of work, on making provisions for continuous learning, and on encouraging others to take leadership with

their peers. The benefits of these positions ranged from improving the self-esteem of those who held the roles to building stronger school-based support groups and networks.

Again, the findings suggested that the teachers who held the roles grew enormously and that they could provide some excellent services for the other teachers within their buildings.

These studies provide important information. A large number of teachers are currently involved in leadership positions in their schools. The place holders find the roles to be enormously beneficial in that they grow intellectually while moving beyond their isolated classrooms. Many of the roles would appear to have been administratively selected or appointed. Others were created by the local association. Teachers fulfilled a variety of responsibilities depending on their context and settings.

At the same time, these studies, taken as a whole, make clear a number of questions which remain unanswered. What is the actual day-to-day work that these teachers do in their leadership positions? How does the context of the school impact the work which they do? Do these roles provide growth opportunities for more than a limited few? What kinds of roles would teachers who are not in leadership roles create? Is there any evidence that the existing roles improve the quality of educational experience for students? How is evaluation of existing roles conducted? How do the teacher organizations and unions feel about the kinds of roles teachers currently hold? Is the work more administrative in nature or focused on the concerns of classroom teachers? Are the selection procedures important to the success of the roles? It was in the light of these remaining questions that the study described in this paper was undertaken.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to gather data which would allow the examination of the study questions, a multiple-case study of three teachers who hold leadership positions of different kinds in various parts of the country was conducted. Exploratory in nature, the study was designed to allow close observation of teacher leaders as they went about their leadership responsibilities. During the course of the two weeks, study subjects were observed during the full length of their working day. Observational data was hand-written and analyzed each night in order to isolate confusing information which required further clarification or to pursue interesting leads. Two interviews were conducted with each of the subjects in order to deal directly with the study questions, as well as to clarify observational data. These interviews were tape recorded and lasted from between an hour-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours each.

In addition, four colleagues were interviewed who were selected by the subject to represent a variety of perspectives. Because it was impossible to interview the entire faculty at each site, getting a range of opinions appeared to be the most productive. The

subject was asked to identify a strong supporter who had benefitted from the leadership position which the teacher leader held, a neutral colleague, one who was opposed to the leadership position which the teacher held, and the local association representative. In all cases except one, the interviews with the colleagues indicated that the teacher leaders' perceptions had been accurate. In the erroneous case, the colleagues were more supportive than the teacher leader imagined.

Finally, documents were collected at each site as they were pertinent to the case. While the observational data added up to some six-hundred pages of field notes plus thirty-five pages of tape transcriptions, the document collection was huge, including some seventeen books.

Data analysis focused on the individual cases first. The units of analysis were embedded in each of the cases—the subjects themselves, the colleagues, the context. Then, cross-case analysis was conducted by searching through the three cases for similarities and differences. Because dominant themes emerged out of each of the cases, these themes provided another means by which to conduct the cross-case comparison.

## THE SUBJECTS

The study sample consisted of three teachers: Ted Smith, Mary Jones and Gwen Ingman. Each was a member of the state affiliate of the National Education Association. Each was selected because they were perceived to be leaders by both administrators and teachers within their own districts. Each held different kinds of leadership roles within their own teaching community. All of them taught one-half of their time, and had half-time release to fulfill their leadership responsibilities.

Ted had been teaching for twenty-two years at the high school level in a rural Eastern community and had achieved national recognition for his work with students. The successful nature of his projects with students had allowed him to form a sort of school within a school, and to form an outside corporation of which he was the president. As a result, he taught four classes per day in the local high school where he was the senior staff person. He held no formal leadership position within his school. The rest of his time was spent running the corporation which involved hiring other teachers who taught according to his philosophy, also in the regular, local high school. He worked with a board of directors, secured funding from outside sources, and oversaw a large budget which supported a variety of activities. In an attempt to spread his very successful teaching philosophy, he taught college courses in four different states and had support staff who coordinated teacher networks for those teachers who wished to experiment with his methodology after taking the course. Ted was selected because his position was self-created and provided enormous leadership for teachers around the country, while he functioned as a regular, though entrepreneurial, teacher within his own system.

Mary had been teaching middle school students for thirty years. She taught in a Western suburban school district which is experiencing the shift from suburban affluence to urban complexity. Mary originally applied for and was hired as a teacher on special assignment, a formal leadership position created in her district. In that position, her responsibility was to provide instructional support for teachers (hence, IST) to help them to experiment with new methodologies.

After four years, Mary did not believe that the position was working well. Other teachers were not taking advantage of the IST's expertise, or when they did invite Mary into their classrooms to work, they often used it as catch-up time rather than as professional development time. As a result, she and a fellow specialist designed an experimental project where they would team-teach 60 heterogeneously mixed students, using a variety of instructional techniques and an integrated approach to the curriculum. The classroom was to be a demonstration center for other teachers—a place where they could come to observe and to experiment themselves. Mary also did inservice presentations for other teachers within her district, and taught a variety of courses. Her case was particularly interesting because she had exercised some leadership in redesigning her leadership position.

Gwen taught in a rural elementary school and was just finishing her tenth year. She had been appointed to a half-time specialist position in order to support other teachers in their practice of Madeline Hunter's approach to teaching, "Instructional Theory into Practice" (ITIP). Gwen's position was formal, created by the central office at the ratio of one teacher specialist per building. A teaching librarian in the morning, she visited other teachers' classrooms in the afternoon in order to observe and demonstrate for them such techniques as teaching to objectives, anticipatory set, monitoring, adjusting, or reteaching. This position was designed to support better instruction and to provide teachers with more collegial opportunities. She also taught a college course in ITIP once during the school year for teachers from throughout the district. These positions had been subject to some controversy when instituted three years earlier, but were reported to be very successful and well supported at the time of the study. Gwen's case was particularly interesting because she held a well defined position and because there were rumors afloat that the position was still not supported by the teachers.

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE CASES

Each of the subjects, the roles they filled, and the context in which they worked were quite different. Because the uniqueness of each of the cases is essential to the findings which emerged, a brief snapshot of a work day with each subject has been included. The incidents reported all actually occurred, but may be re-ordered to give the reader a real sense of the role.

## Ted Smith: An Entrepreneurial Teacher Leader

Ted Smith arrived at his office at 8:00 a.m. The office was a reconstructed log cabin set in the midst of one-hundred-fifty acres of land on a hillside in a rural, Southern community. The land had been purchased by Ted's corporation, Talking Mountain, to house their offices and to serve as a kind of museum for the collections of mountain artifacts he and his students have been collecting over the years. In all, there were twenty-six reconstructed log buildings on the land, so that the office sat in amongst other cabins, spread out, but visible in the distance. It was silent there, calm, except for the chittering birds. A lazy cat rolled in a bed of catnip near the cabin door.

Each morning Ted met here with the corporation support staff for an hour and a half to review budgets, set schedules, arrange travel, check on publication schedules, check their own documentation of their work and progress. He and Kate, his office manager, set a schedule of four meetings for the following Wednesday when he would drive to the local metropolitan area to teach a college course for teachers. The course walked teachers through the process of building curriculum and instruction around John Dewey's educational philosophy. The meetings would enable him to contact a major source of potential funding: two potential board members and an existing board member who advised them on their trust accounts.

As he left the office, Kate handed him a large package. Inside was a large portrait of Elvis painted on hot pink velvet sent to him by one of the coordinators of the Teacher Outreach Centers—centers in other states where he is teaching in an attempt to spread his very successful educational philosophy. The painting was shocking, to say the least. He chuckled and tacked it up on the wall; clearly he perceived this as a joke. Other staff members wandered in to have a look. They were less sure about the joke; some thought it quite lovely—it was of Elvis, after all.

Ted raced off to the local high school some ten miles down the road. As he arrived, his second-period class was working away—spread out all over the floor, some in the makeshift darkroom which protruded into the middle of the room, some at the computers at the back of the room. Betty, another Talking Mountain teacher who team-taught with Ted, was there, busy with the students at the computers. Ted circled the room, checking on the progress of each of the groups. The room buzzed with conversation and quiet industry.

These students generated a magazine four times a year, and each group determined its focus, researched the articles, conducted interviews, transcribed the tapes, and then wrote and edited their final articles. In addition, they did their own layout and photography work. Ted worked with each group as they needed help, and organized the stacks of papers, books, and lesson plans on his own desk. When these students left, another group came in.

Ted used the time between classes to help students refocus their work, to simply find out how students were, and to troubleshoot problems with students who needed help.

The next group of students were participants in a college preparatory research class. Ted helped them to generate questions and organize them into an interview for an impending visit of a local Cherokee Indian. He facilitated the discussion for the students while sitting on the floor amongst the group. The atmosphere was relaxed, and yet they accomplished a great deal. At the end of the lesson he asked them to describe the steps they had just been through in the generation of an interview: brainstorm interest areas, formulate questions, organize the questions into categories of related topics, refine the questions, and put them into sequence.

After a five-minute break, another large class of students piled into the class. This was the beginning Talking Mountain class which focused on magazine production. Two other Talking Mountain teachers joined Ted to team-teach this group. Ted waited for quiet, and then had each group report where it was on its particular project. The group reviewed deadlines and who was to go where and then divided, some staying in Ted's room, some disappearing with each of the other two teachers. He reminded them that they needed to reconvene for the last ten minutes of class to visit with a group of eleven teachers who were to arrive momentarily from two neighboring states. Again, Ted ranged the group to help students.

At the end of the period, the group reconvened to visit with the teachers, who were part of one of the Outreach Networks and so had taken Ted's course. They asked the students a variety of questions about their work and whether they liked this particular way of learning. The students answered with confidence and enthusiasm, noting that they worked far more hours in this class than they did in others because they were interested in the material. As the class disappeared when the bell rang, Ted organized the visiting teachers to observe other Talking Mountain classes which were in session.

The day proceeded with only a half-hour break for lunch. Ted managed to choke down a sandwich at a faculty table in the lunchroom in the midst of all the students. The noise was deafening.

Ted's fourth class was another college preparatory English class. This group was working on different kinds of essays. Ted demonstrated and then went over the evaluation criteria with them. This was a negotiating process in that he asked them to change anything they did not understand and to suggest options which they felt would be more appropriate.

Sixth period was his planning period, which he shared with Frank and Tom, his co-teachers. They wandered into his room with cans of pop and sat down at a table to review their progress with their third-period classes. They reviewed their students, focused on which students needed which kind of help and which of the teachers was best suited to give it. They then reviewed their individual curriculum writing projects. Each of them was writing a curriculum guide for teachers to describe the teaching process they used in a variety of disciplines. Frank was writing his about music, while Tom was writing his about producing radio shows. Both were past their deadlines and looked sheepish. Ted was interrupted by a visitor.

Another teacher from a neighboring district came in to talk with Ted about how teachers might arrange more entrepreneurial settings. Ted shared his experiences, but felt a bit at a loss to answer such a large question. As that visitor left, another walked in—a teacher dressed in a suit, who was applying for the recently vacated department head position at the school. He wanted to visit with Ted about his programs, and about the school at large, because Ted's classes fit into the regular curriculum at the school. As the bell rang marking the end of the day, a parent walked in with her son to help him type a manuscript into the computer, the special education teacher came down to visit, and the secretary came over the loudspeaker announcing a faculty meeting in the library. All the teachers groaned and headed down to the meeting.

In the library the faculty assembled at small tables, chatting, joking comfortably. The principal, a large man in his mid-forties, stood up to take over.

He spoke with a deep Southern drawl, "Make sure you folks are teaching fifty minutes of the period every day. I know that spring is a more relaxed time and that it's hard to keep the kids working. Still, it's hard for us to justify our work if we are doing nothing. I don't want to see you giving busy-work either. We should be pushing the kids right up to the end. I have little free time myself to be dealing with problems and complaints from parents and kids. The busier they are, the less time I have to spend dealing with messes.

Without any discussion, he moved on to the copyright laws and the problems the school was having with illegal videotapes. He called on Ms. Kathy to explain the law and asked the teachers to erase those tapes that were illegal. He then asked a series of questions at random: "Mr. Long, how do you use standardized test scores in your classroom?"

Mr. Long hemmed and hawed, and then responded, "Well, I look at the test scores when I see a student in jeopardy, when it looks like he or she might not make it. Pretty much, I rely on the counselors to use the test scores when placing students."

Without comment, the principal singled out the home economics teacher. "Rinnie, how do you meet the state guidelines in your classroom?"

She paused, turned red, and then answered, "Well, the state guidelines require that the kids know a lot about nutrition; so during the year, we cover the four food groups, and we talk about how important proper nutrition is to general health. Is that what you want to know?"

The principal said it was and that he wasn't asking the questions for sport, but because the state monitors could show up at any time. He wanted the staff to be able to answer their questions with some semblance of intelligence. He dismissed the staff with a promise of more questions like those asked at random. As we left the faculty meeting, I asked whether the principal always used such a positive approach with the staff. Tom, walking with Ted and me, was quick to respond, "He's one helluva lot better than the last one." (Field Notes, Subject 1, p. 16)

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Ted and his colleagues reconvened in his classroom, where the entire Talking Mountain staff assembled for their weekly meeting to review the various projects they had underway. As people wandered in, each member wrote agenda items on the board. One of the staff took responsibility for facilitating the meeting, a responsibility which rotated throughout the staff.

They prioritized the agenda and then discussed their work until 7:00 p.m. Most of the discussion centered around students and finding the right kind of assistance for them. All decisions were reached by consensus.

Ted roared off to meet with the visiting teachers who were staying at a guest house on the Talking Mountain land. The group included ten teachers and the Outreach Network coordinator. In an informal discussion, the teachers asked questions about the Talking Mountain classes at Ted's school. In turn, he asked them questions about their own projects. One teacher and his students had just cut a record featuring local musicians. Another group was tracing the history of the county courthouse, which dated to pre-Civil War years. It had been used at one time as a whore house and a jail simultaneously. Ted slipped out the door at around 10:00 p.m. He still had a stack of papers to grade before school the next morning.

### His Colleagues

Of the four colleagues I interviewed, all perceived Ted as a leader. Perhaps because he did not have a formal leadership position and because his work did not impact their classes in any way, they were most supportive of everything he did. All of them had taken his class. Only one of them indicated that her teaching had changed substantially because of it. One of the teachers indicated that she already had taught that way, while the others found the class to be stimulating. Several of them noted that it was the best college class they had ever had. They perceived Ted as a leader because he had the courage to do things differently, because he brought information to them from other schools all across the country, and because he exposed them to the hundreds of visiting educators who trooped through his classroom every year. They also saw him as a leader because he was able to accomplish so much with his students.

### Gwen Ingman: A Teacher Leader in a Principal's Model

Gwen arrived in her office in the library at 8:00 a.m. Although classes would not start until 9:00 a.m., she had a number of things to do to keep the library running smoothly, to prepare for her teaching responsibilities, and to get ready for her additional responsibilities which are part of her leadership role. She glanced around the office, she checked her "to-do" list, and laminated a few books, while talking to the library aide about what needed to be done. She then raced off to the faculty room to participate in birthday wishes for one of the staff members. Everyone bolted down a slice of a big, gooey cake, and called out friendly aging insults. Gwen raced back to the library and prepared for her first class.

Gwen shared responsibility for the library with Jane, a morning kindergarten teacher. So that the rest of the faculty could have a badly needed half-hour of planning time, she and Jane taught all the students in the school for one half-hour session each week. While Jane took the majority of the primary students, Gwen took the intermediate students. Each day then, Gwen taught four or five classes in the morning; Jane took over in the afternoon. Gwen and Jane divided the work of running the library. Gwen had responsibility for the audio-visual equipment, for checking in new books, for coordinating the library aides. Jane was in charge of ordering new materials, shelving procedures, and the library inventory. A parent came in to discuss plans for an upcoming event. Gwen went back to laminating books while they visited.

Gwen's first class was a group of kindergartners. They tiptoed in and sang a song about being quiet in the library. She spent the first ten minutes checking in books they had taken out, and reviewing their plans for the day. The next ten minutes were spent looking for new books. Students who had not returned their library books were not allowed to look for new books and so sat quietly at their desks. Gwen wandered among the others, reminding them to be quiet and helping them to find good selections. The last ten minutes were spent as Gwen read the children a story they had illustrated. They held up their pictures at the right moment in the story. They clearly thought this was fun. Class over, they lined up quietly, hugged Gwen's knees, and filed out with Jane, their teacher.

The next class, made up of sixth graders, was one that Gwen worried about. They were difficult students whom she found very difficult to motivate. The students filed in noisily and settled at round tables. Gwen followed the same format—ten minutes to review what they'd do, ten minutes to check out a book, ten minutes to engage in a lesson. She spent a good deal of her time waiting for quiet and disciplining troublesome students. While looking for books, one boy immediately went into a corner of the library and picked up the flag and began waving it around wildly. Another group of boys and girls congregated in the reading loft to talk. Gwen roamed the room reminding them to be quiet and moving those who were disrupting others.

She rang a bell to signal that it was time for them to move back to their seats. The lesson focused on how they wanted to be remembered as a class by their elementary school. She approached this by lecturing to them about a responsibility frame, a technique out of their critical thinking curriculum. The students were clearly uninterested. Gwen stopped repeatedly to ask for their attention.

Everyone was drained by the time they left. Gwen bent over in frustration to pick up pencil shavings and sunflower seeds sprinkled on the floor under one of the desks. "These are Darren's. I know it for a fact. But I'm not sure it's worth a fight." (Field Notes, Subject 2, p. 14)

The school psychologist walked in to use the phone in the library office. Gwen winced in frustration again. There was no other phone in the school for teachers to use, because they were not allowed to use the phone in the office. As a result, Gwen was constantly prevented from using her own office while other teachers closed the door to make calls.

Two more classes filed inand followed much the same format as the earlier two. One class, fourth graders from the gifted classroom, planned a project to make video-taped advertisements. They watched a fragmented and silly tape by the previous year's students. The students enjoyed seeing their friends. The next class of third graders seemed to like the library. They watched an old filmstrip about an Indian boy and a horse. They were disappointed that they couldn't watch the whole thing in one sitting.

Jane came in to take her turn at teaching in the library. She and Gwen discussed the fact that they had $2,400 to spend before the end of the month. Jane mentioned a student in her class who was "driving her nuts". She had made him sit by the door. "He's really smart, he makes good connections—but he's such a snot!" (Field Notes, Subject 2, p. 14)

At lunch, Gwen ate in the large, cheery faculty room, where only crumbs were left of the big cake. She and the other teachers talked about how much more difficult teaching had become—as a result of all the family problems and disruptions in home life. The school secretary came in to tell Gwen that Child Protective Services would be there in an hour about a suspected abuse case. Gwen would have to be present during the hearings as the principal designee, because the principal was out of the building.

After lunch, Gwen was released to fulfill her leadership responsibilities. Her leadership role had been created by the superintendent, who believed that the role would reduce teacher isolation while increasing teachers' instructional skill. The roles had not been well received by the teachers, but the administration had held firm on them. Each Instructional Support Teacher (IST) was selected by the principal in the building. The IST's had all received training in Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) from Dr. Madeline Hunter who had worked in the district for years.

Mary, Gwen's principal, believed that the roles were very successful and that she had observed some very good results in teachers' classrooms as a result of Gwen's work. Mary indicated that Gwen conducted five observations per week and the feedback sessions as well. While Mary occasionally asked Gwen to work with a particular teacher, she noted that they never discussed Gwen's interactions with the teachers. She felt that was critical for the teachers' trust levels. Mary noted that she had worked long and hard to build Gwen's credibility among the staff.

Gwen wandered into a third grade classroom. The students were playing a game in which they solved a problem and had to race up to the teacher's desk with the right answer. The kids were wild, but working. He then moved to a timed math quiz, after calling for quiet. He yelled "Stop!" after a few minutes, and the students moaned and groaned. He then had the students take out their math books. "If you want to do this in class, you can, but you'll have to do it quietly. If you can't be quiet, you'll have to read the book by yourselves." (Field Notes, Subject 2, p. 13) At this point, Gwen, who had been taking notes unobtrusively in the back of the room, put a note on his desk and left. The observation lasted approximately eight minutes.

Next we went to the Art Room where Gwen debriefed an observation with the art teacher who had recently transferred from the community college to the elementary level. They

talked for ten minutes about a class which Gwen had observed the week before. Gwen indicated that the teacher used her time well, that she had all of the students involved by having them hold up their hands to indicate that they understood what she was doing. The art teacher noted, "I have them do that so I can understand where they are, and so I can watch those kids. I promised them that if they give me a signal, I won't call them on it if it's wrong. I just want them to participate." (Field Notes, Subject 2, p. 69) Gwen also indicated that she might have extended the lesson by connecting what the children were doing to other cultures. They concluded by visiting about their personal lives. The teacher seemed most appreciative of Gwen's feedback.

As we moved to another doorway, all of the children were on all fours in a circle. Heads were down, bottoms up. It was difficult to locate the teacher as she was in the midst of the group. They were studying a box turtle. Gwen veered away from the doorway before entering saying, "Probably not a lot of learning going on in there today." (Field Notes, Subject 2, p. 52) She explained that ITIP worked best with direct, teacher-centered instruction, because she had to take verbatim notes on what the teacher did and said. The turtle lesson was not as appropriate. We called on another class before Gwen had to go attend to the child abuse hearing.

When she returned to the library, she prepared for the next day's assembly. Some of her other leadership responsibilities were to run all the school's assemblies, to coordinate the building's testing program, and to plan the spring teas. She felt very fragmented and unable to spend as much time with the teachers as she would have liked. At the end of the day, she was also in charge of the buses, and so grabbed a few signs, her coat, and flew out to the playground to get the kids lined up in front of the right buses.

As the buses left the grounds, teachers began filing into the library for a faculty meeting. Friends clustered around tables, and everyone chatted quietly. Mary, the principal, chaired the meeting, which had been convened to discuss student awards. Mary indicated that she would like to engage in the process of building consensus about how awards should be given to students. She asked that every faculty member air his or her feelings on the subject. The staff's opinions varied. Some believed that awards were a waste of time. Others believed that giving awards was the only way they kept their students in line.

Mary stated that they had established a policy that every student in the school should receive at least one award for something well done during the school year. She went on to say that there was a ton of research which indicated that awards do make a difference to student motivation. "I would like you all to check to make sure that there are enough awards available in the staff workroom," she said. "I want you to take this seriously." This activity concluded building consensus on rewards. The staff meeting went on to guarding keys, earthquake drills, and the spring fun run sponsored by the PTA.

At the end of the meeting, Gwen returned to her office to straighten things up and to prepare for the next day. She left at approximately 5:00 p.m.

### Her Colleagues

Of the four people interviewed at Gwen's school, all were supportive of Gwen as a person. Two were supportive of her position, while two others were adamantly opposed to it.

Those who supported it believed that it gave them an opportunity to talk to someone else. One of the interviewees hoped that it was a way for her good ideas to be shared as well. Both of them indicated that they had had some very good discussions with Gwen about teaching, although one of them indicated that those conversations were never about ITIP.

Those opposed believed that the position increased their class size, that it did not improve the quality of their instruction, or that it was an administrative support position. They were angry because they had not been consulted about the role and had little idea what she did with her time or how the information was used.

### Mary Jones: A Reflective Teacher Leader

Mary taught in an experimental project in a large middle school in the northwestern United States. At the time of the study, she was just completing the first year of the project in which she and her colleague, Barb, team-taught fifty-seven sixth grade, heterogeneously mixed students. They had the students for one-half of the school day and were responsible for math, science, English, social studies and drug and alcohol education. They added computer instruction as they gained access to sixteen computers.

They taught their students by integrating the curriculum along thematic lines. No students were pulled out for remedial or extra services; all specialists came to them. The women shared two rooms with a door which could be pulled shut when they wished to work in smaller groups.

These two women had designed this program as a means by which to provide a demonstration center for other teachers in their building and across their district. Both of them had held full-time leadership positions previously which they did not believe worked satisfactorily. The administrations in their district and in their building were completely supportive of the project and had helped them to get set up and to secure the resources they needed in order to work.

Mary arrived at school at 7:00 a.m.—much earlier than usual—in order to get set up for the day prior to attending a staff meeting. She moved around her room checking on the student's things, placing papers on their desks with words of encouragement written in brightly colored pens. She wrote the beginning assignment on the overhead and moved with Barbara down to the grade-level meeting which had replaced many of the whole-faculty meetings.

People sauntered in slowly and began to discuss the end-of-the-year field trip to the local zoo. They debated whether they should have sack lunches or a barbecue. A barbecue meant that they would have to deal with parents; sack lunches would be simpler. One

woman noted that she had had a lousy time trying to get parents involved last year. Another noted that they would have to collect money and that was a hassle. They discussed whether they should walk the students around the lake after lunch or just return to school. Many felt that the walk would be too risky. They discussed whether they should do worksheets or some kind of activity. The predominant tone was negative.

Eventually Mary and Barbara and another woman shared responsibility for contacting the parents, for organizing slides of African animals, and for organizing activities to be done while at the zoo. The tone was chilly, as the staff was clearly divided between those who constantly advocated for students, and those who wanted to do as little as possible. Mary left feeling indignant about the other teachers' responses and attitudes.

Students were waiting outside of her room. She pulled the wall shut, turned on the overhead which read:

> "Good morning!
>
> Write: How dialogical reasoning (both sides) is different from my side reasoning.
>
> Which is better? Why?
>
> Write neatly and put your name on the paper.
>
> Thank you." (Field notes, subject 3, p. 1)

As the students settled in, they began to write, Mary used the time to greet students, to listen to their news, and to accept work. She posted a list of due dates on the board and then had the students share what they had written with students near them. She gave them time to revise what they had written—to make their own stronger. She then went over the agenda for the day. They would have one-and-a-half hours of project time—integrated learning time.

The students were studying the concept of immigration and so had been working on a computer simulation following an Irish family to the United States. In addition, they had completed family trees and traced the relatives' journeys to the United States. They had prepared budgets, created family crests with Logo and studied the countries from which their own families came. Several of the students were recent immigrants—from Cambodia, Iran, and Italy. She reminded them of what had to be done; two boys pushed the wall back and all fifty-seven of them moved at once.

The two classrooms of children quickly mixed and paired up into groups of two and three or four. Several groups raced to the computers to make sure that they got on right away. One willowy little girl, sat down to read *Sweet Valley High*. Completely engrossed, she did not move for the rest of the project time. An interracial group of boys—two Blacks, an Asian, and one White—pushed four desks together and proceed to work on their math. One of the boys went to the cutter and sliced paper into fractional segments which they

needed to work with. As they began to work, they sang "I'm a Little Teapot" and laughed while doing the motions. (Field notes, Subject 3, p. 21)

Another miniscule girl with long, brown braids worked with a tall Asian girl to get their computer partner, Mike, to work with them. Kittie had secured the computer and was insistent that he come and help. He ignored them until her persistence wore him down.

"Alright! Get me a pencil!" he shouted at her.

Kittie put her hands on her hips, leaned forward, and shouted back in a smaller, squeakier voice, "I don't have to!"

Mike grinned, got up, and moved with them to the computer. Kittie cheerfully rattled off what they had to do. (Field notes, Subject 3, p. 58)

Two other boys worked at a computer together, trying to figure out the Logo exercises in the package which Barbara had prepared for them. One leaned into the computer from the right while the other sat on the back of his chair with his feet on the seat so that he could be at eye-level with the computers. They carried on a lengthy discussion which consisted of one-syllable words, eyes constantly on the computer screen as they attempted to make a circle and then chart their movements.

"Try this."

"Huh?"

"Oh no!"

"That's wrong."

"Try this."

"Maybe this."

"Wow!" (Field notes, Subject 3, p. 74)

Other groups of students worked with the math specialist in the center of the room. Others sat on the floor in clumps, using resource books to get information for reports. The room hummed and buzzed while Mary and Barbara meandered from group to group, giving advice, answering questions, offering encouragement.

At this point seven teachers and a central office administrator from a neighboring district came in to visit. They were interested in interdisciplinary teaching and wished to observe and to ask questions. Mary and Barb sent them around the room to visit with students. Later Mary answered questions while Barb worked with the students.

During recess, the students played just outside their room so that Mary and Barb could keep an eye on them, because to keep the students for four subjects, they had agreed to

give up their duty-free recesses. Three student teachers came into the room and talked with Barb and Mary about the lessons they would be teaching after recess.

Mary and Barb called the students back together, had them switch sides, and pulled the door shut. Mary repeated the morning's assignment with this group while the student teacher prepared her notes. The university supervisor settled into the back of the room to observe. Mary noted that the supervisor had a very restrictive checklist which guided her observations so that she never had the opportunity to watch what the students were doing. Mary took her place in the back to collect information on the students while the student teacher launched into a halting lesson.Mary took notes, but quickly took a cue from the student teacher to resume working with the class.

Mary reviewed with the students what they have to do, peeked through the wall, and opened it up for another forty-minute project time. All the student teachers and Mary and Barbara worked with the students. Shortly before lunch, Mary called the entire room back to order and asked the students to write for a few minutes about how they used their project time. These were handed to any of the teachers as the students trooped out to lunch. The quiet was quite unsettling.

At lunch Mary, Barb and the student teachers sat apart from the rest of the faculty and discussed the lessons the student teachers presented. They discussed one student who had a great deal of emotional difficulty and wondered how best to support him. They called the principal over to indicate that they thought that the child had suicidal tendencies, and spent the rest of the time determining the best possible strategies.

After lunch, Mary, Barb and the student teachers were joined in the classroom by a university professor with whom they had been collaborating in the evaluation of their experimental project. After a jovial exchange, they determined how to prepare for the post-test data gathering and the final qualitative data gathering which was about to be completed. Procedures set, they established the dates for a working weekend after the data had been analyzed by the professor. The group would then determine how best to modify their program based on the information they gained. That weekend would include a central office administrator, another professor, and the two teachers.

The two women threw the papers they had collected into bags before sitting down for twenty-minute private debriefing sessions with the student teachers during which they shared their notes with them. Mary communicated that there was no one right way to teach and that teaching was extremely complex, and so required small steps, patience and a love of children. The student teacher left feeling very good about her progress.

Mary and Barb flew out to their cars to rush to the Central Office to meet with their colleagues who had maintained the leadership positions (IST) which they had held previously. The purpose of the meeting was to enable the two women to summarize their experiences for the rest of the group. They talked about the benefits of their partnership. They told about the long hours they had maintained in order to develop curriculum because none existed. They talked about the difficulty they had had in dealing with four of the students who did not work well during class, the demands of working with three

student teachers, the work of coordinating numbers of visitors who were interested in watching—most of whom came from districts outside their own. Finally they talked about the discomfort they felt amongst their own staff members, only two of whom had used the center. The conversation was deep and thoughtful.

Several of the specialists noted that they did not want to go back to the classroom because it was so much work. Mary replied by saying, "If you value students to the very highest level of your being, then you have to behave in these ways; you have to try to find new ways that work." Field notes, Subject 3, p. 100) It was close to 5:30 p.m. when the group dispersed. Mary and Barb hurried off to their cars to go home to eat, to plan for the next day and to review student work.

### Her Colleagues

These abbreviated snapshots of the individual cases should help to illuminate the findings reached in the study, both in terms of answers to the questions and in terms of emerging issues. While the study did reveal a number of answers to the questions which provided the investigative framework, a number of other issues were uncovered which would appear to have important implications for those interested in the conditions and circumstances of teacher leadership.

At Mary's school only three colleagues were interviewed. The local association representative divided her time between two buildings. No suitable time could be found for the interview. Of the remaining three, all were supportive of Mary as a person. While all understood that Mary and Barbara were experimenting with a demonstration classroom, two were unclear as to how that impacted their own classrooms. One of the teachers was blatantly angry. She perceived that Mary and Barb were given the lion's share of the resources and of the administrators attention while the rest of the teachers were ignored. She was unclear about the purpose of the project and felt that the rest of the staff needed more information to understand the purpose and the benefit of a demonstration room.

### Answers to the Questions

While each of the cases was quite unique, examination of the data provided some answers to the original study questions. A brief review of the questions demonstrates that there is much to be learned about teacher leadership from the positions which exist. The nature of the work teacher leaders do is various and complex. These three cases indicate that teachers function as curricular and instructional mentors for other teachers, fund raisers, professors, structural innovators, program administrators, coaches, curriculum developers, authors of texts on instructional methods, staff developers, partners in research on practice, as well as partners in the business of teaching.

This study appears to clarify why the current reform rhetoric is so confusing to practitioners. Devaney (1987), in a paper commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation, described the roles which she believed would improve the quality of the educational

experience for students while improving the professional lives of teachers. They were mentoring, appraising and critiquing colleagues for instructional growth, conducting staff development, and working collaboratively. Teachers from this study currently fulfill all of the roles recommended by Devaney. The difference between the roles called for and those which exist is not clarified in the current rhetoric.

## CONSTRAINTS AND SUPPORTS

These teacher leaders were constrained by their lack of time, by the original conceptions of the roles, and by the egalitarian ethic in teaching. All of them felt that they did not have enough time to both teach and to lead without a sacrifice of one or both. Both Gwen and Mary were constrained by their administrators' conceptions of the job. Because the administrators conceived the jobs somewhat differently than the teacher leaders, they were asked to do things which did not match their conception of the role. Gwen was asked to do administrative work—planning volunteer teas, acting as principal in absentia—while Mary was asked to keep her demonstration classroom quiet because the administrators were nervous that it might cause professional jealousy. All three of the subjects indicated that they were constrained by the fact that teaching is an autonomous profession, where everyone holds equal status. Thus the norms of privacy and isolation combine into a sort of egalitarian ethic which makes it difficult for teachers to learn from their near neighbors.

At the same time, all of the teacher leaders indicated that they were supported by the same things that constrained them. They felt that the time they were given to lead was crucial and that administrative support was crucial. Without these two critical factors, no leadership roles would have been possible. It is interesting to note that none of the teacher leaders indicated that collegial approval was an important supporting condition.

### Definitions of Teacher Leadership

Both the teacher leaders and their colleagues interviewed at their school sites, indicated that they had never before discussed teacher leadership, nor had they attempted to define it. As a result, they found the defining process very difficult and one for which they needed more time. The confusion ranged around whether teacher leaders needed to remain in the classroom, or whether those teachers on full-time release could be leaders. Most teachers think of department head positions and association work as teacher leadership positions, and yet, when asked whether those positions help them to improve their instruction, they did not generally believe that this was so. Most department chair positions were perceived to be administrative in nature.

## Selection of Teacher Leadership

Data from this study would indicate Devaney (1987) was correct in claiming that selection procedures for teacher leaders appear to be problematic. Teacher leaders in this study either created the position themselves or were annointed by the administration. In neither case did they represent the larger teaching force, nor did their selection process indicate that other teachers were consulted in any way. While Ted's case was the exception, the other two experienced difficulty in acceptance from the other teachers, seemingly as a result of the selection process.

## Evaluation of Teacher Leadership Positions

Ted had hired an outside evaluator to check on the efficacy of the Talking Mountain projects. In the course of that investigation, longitudinal data was being gathered to determine how much of an effect on teachers' classroom behaviors the course and the Outreach Network associations were having. In a very different way, both Gwen and Mary were evaluated by their principals, who conducted the evaluations much as they would have evaluated teaching performance without the observation component. The two teacher leaders were asked to indicate what their goals were and then to review whether they had accomplished them or not. There was no attempt to determine whether the roles had improved the professional abilities of the other teachers or to determine whether the position had any effect on student outcomes.

## Creating Leadership Positions to Improve Practice

All of the teacher leaders and their colleagues suggested that they would create leadership positions very different from those which currently exist. Neither Gwen nor Mary nor any of their colleagues suggested that they would institute more of their own positions as a means by which to improve instruction. The common threads of their recommendations seemed to indicate that teachers need people resources: people who could help them remain current on contemporary research; those who could help them to build stronger, more current, more integrated and challenging curriculum. All of them indicated that they would like to have greater opportunity to impact the decision-making procedures which affect public education at all levels, and that they would like to have more time and opportunity to work collaboratively.

## Support of the Professional Associations

It appeared that the local associations supported Ted's position because his position did not interfere with class size issues or with salary issues. On the other hand, neither Mary or Gwen felt that the association represented them well. In Gwen's case, the association had been quite verbal in its opposition to these positions. Currently, NEA does not have a formal policy concerning teacher leadership, but has historically been quite clear in its rejection of role differentiation. It would seem that their concern stems from the fact that role differentiation would interfere with both class size and with collective bargaining issues.

### Teaching and Leading: Pluses and Minuses

All of the subjects in this study noted that their personal skill in teaching increased enormously because of their involvement in their leadership positions. Furthermore, they all indicated that they grew in understanding of the complexity of the educational endeavor, and so, felt better able to contribute. Growth occurred as they taught courses for their colleagues, as they explained their work to administrators, and as they were exposed to new ideas and techniques, as they watched others teach.

At the same time, these roles appeared to detract from their teaching because of the constraints of time. All of them mentioned that with the additional responsibilities, something had to give. While teaching seemed to come first for all of them, their leadership responsibilities were often put on the back burner in order find the time to work with students. As a result, all experienced frustration.

### Reducing Teacher Isolation

Both the teacher leaders and their colleagues indicated that while their positions reduced their own personal isolation, the larger teaching force was not significantly impacted. The reasons for this appeared to be more complex than the simple structure of the roles, however. Both Mary and Gwen indicated that their colleagues were not particularly receptive to the opportunities the leadership positions might have provided. Colleagues indicated that the creation of the positions, the selection procedures, and the focus of the positions proved problematic for them. Only in Ted's case did one of the colleagues interviewed indicate that her association with him in his leadership capacity had had a dramatic effect on the way in which she taught. In the other cases, while the colleagues indicated that the leaders provided personal leadership, their positions had not instigated much instructional change.

## EMERGENT ISSUES

Taken as a whole then, answers to the framing questions would appear to indicate that teacher leadership as it currently exists is at once various, rich, complex, full of possibilities, and troubled. Beyond the questions, cross-case analysis indicates that a number of issues which emerged might have important implications for both those involved in the rhetoric and those in the midst of practice. These issues took the shape of dominant themes, dilemmas and paradoxes. A discussion of each should help to clarify the implications.

## Dominant Themes

At the heart of the discussion on teacher leadership is the necessity to find ways to engage teachers in the improvement of their own professional practice, while providing incentives to attract and retain the very best teachers. Themes from this study would indicate that there is both great potential for that to happen and a good deal of work which needs to be done:

- **Teachers as Valuable Contributors to the Improvement of Practice**

  The models discussed in these cases demonstrated that teachers have enormous, nearly untapped creative resources to apply to the seemingly intransigent problems which plague their practice. Ted has led students to a methodology which appears to beat motivation problems. Mary has begun to develop some excellent models of integrated curriculum and is c with structural modifications which encourage such instruction. Gwen's colleagues have indicated how important it is for them to have someone else—another teacher with whom to share ideas and with whom they can discuss confounding problems. Thus, we see that teachers are currently functioning as curriculum developers, collegial coaches, mentors, partners, and structural improvement designers, among others. The study leads to the assumption that the pool of possibilities is actually much greater, since this examines only three models currently in practice. There are literally hundreds more in need of further examination before the true range and depth of possible models can be understood.

- **Teachers as Non-Participants in the Improvement of Professional Practice**

  This study would also indicate that teachers are virtually non-participants in the discussion about the improvement of professional practice. None of those interviewed had ever been asked to consider what they would create in order to strengthen their own professional growth and their ability to deal successfully with students. They were all but unaware of the national discussion, as well as tired and discouraged from previous promises of great change.

  The reasons for their non-participation are many. Perhaps it is because teaching occurs in bureaucracies where those at the bottom are seldom involved in central decision-making. Perhaps it is that since collective bargaining, teachers have focused on issues related to compensation rather than issues related to working conditions and the improvement of practice. Perhaps it is because their knowledge of practice has long been discounted as too subjective, too non-scientific, so that teachers have not been considered serious partners. Perhaps it is because legislatures have restricted teacher participation through mandated controls. Perhaps it is because the public wants teachers to function in too many capacities—counselors, surrogate parents, intellectual guides, coaches—so that there is no time left for participation. For whatever reasons, teachers'

voices are absent from the current discussion about teacher leadership. The result of such a serious omission can be seen hundreds of times in the history of reform attempts; such change attempts are generally unsuccessful.

- **The Context as a Major Factor in Teacher Leadership Work**

  These cases suggest that each teacher leadership position is firmly rooted in its own context and that context is critically important to the success of the role. If, for instance, one looks at Gwen's role without adequate understanding of the context, one might assume that her colleagues were not satisfied with the position because she lacked skill. Given this perception, Gwen might be sent back to the classroom to be replaced by another annointed teacher. The likelihood that any teacher would be successful in this particular context is not great. In the same vein, if one only considered the courses which Ted taught out of the context of his own school, and his own classroom experience, one would miss how he had been able to innovate in the midst of a very traditional setting. Similarly, if one visited Mary's classroom—because it is such a stimulating and exciting place—the first inclination might be to race back and create a similar kind of demonstration site. Such a replication might well recreate the kinds of tensions between the faculty and the teacher leaders which existed in Mary's building. The context of the roles is critically important to thorough understanding of them.

- **Emerging Characteristics of Strong Teacher Leadership Roles**

  Analysis of these cases demonstrates that certain characteristics of teacher leadership positions might be positive indicators of the role's potential success. For instance, in those cases where teachers have been involved in the creation of the positions which will serve them, there seems to be greater collegial support. Ted's teacher Outreach Networks provide a good example. The teachers who have taken his courses have been involved in the creation of the coordinator's positions. As a result, the leaders who hold these positions have more support from those they serve.

  While this study surfaced no examples of peer involvement in the selection of the teacher leaders, the data suggest that the roles might be better supported if colleagues were involved. In addition, teacher leader positions should be evaluated by those served by the roles so that place holders might learn how to be more effective, and thus more efficacious in the improvement of public schooling. It would also appear that these positions must be designed in cooperation with administrators. If there is no administrative support, again, the positions appear to be weakened.

- **Kinds of Collegiality**

  Ted mentored. Mary partnered with Barb. Gwen and Jane divided up the labor of running the library. Each of these kinds of collaboration involved

a different way of working together. Each involves different underlying assumptions about the roles of those involved.

In mentoring, the more experienced teacher teaches the less experienced colleague. Sometimes this works well. At others, as in Gwen's case when she was to instruct her colleagues in the techniques of ITIP, these underlying assumptions challenged the egalitarian ethics among teachers and created tension which virtually shut down the potential for the working relationship.

Of all of the kinds of collaboration, the partnering experienced by Mary and Barbara was the most personally satisfying and would seem to provide a great deal of incentive for teachers. In any case, not enough is known about the different forms of collaboration to determine which might be appropriate in what circumstances. Given that collegial relationships take different forms and carry with them different responsibilities, tensions, and benefits, consideration should be given in both the evaluation of existing positions and in the creation of new teacher leadership positions.

## The Dilemmas of Teacher Leadership

Examination of these teacher leadership positions pointed out a number of dilemmas which would appear to plague these positions. Those dilemmas might be described as follows:

- **Teacher Leadership: In Search of More Time**

  All of the study participants indicated that they needed more time, but did not know exactly how to provide it. Perhaps the working day could be extended. Perhaps the roles could be divided among more people so that each teacher leader had fewer secondary responsibilities.

- **Teacher Leadership: Structural Changes versus Role Changes?**

  The discussion between the teacher leaders and their colleagues indicated that some people believed that formal leadership positions would be more helpful to their professional growth. Others indicated that they would prefer that all teachers were afforded the opportunity to lead at times and that all teachers would be given the opportunity to work collaboratively, rather than creating single positions. This second structural change is similar to the concept of leadership density described by Meyer (1971). Which is more appropriate in different settings? How might teachers decide which would work better in their schools? Can positions be created which will support the larger teaching force in addition to providing growth for the teacher leader? Conversely, can a broader base of leadership be established and still foster any kind of real expertise?

- **National Education Association: Lack of Clarity about Teacher Leadership?**

  Teachers felt uncomfortable with these positions because they were uncertain of the NEA's stance. The NEA's position on role differentiation, on structural changes for more collegial opportunities is as yet unclear. The apparent ambivalence of the national association sends a confusing message to the membership. While not overtly dismissed, teacher leadership is not encouraged either. Teachers will need a clearer understanding of the Association's position before these roles can become more widespread and more meaningful for teachers.

- **Teacher Leadership: Administrator Support or Teacher Support?**

  While Gwen's positions was created to strengthen the instructional repertoire of her colleagues, a good deal of her time was expended in administrative tasks which supported the principal. As a result, she was constantly torn between which was more important. In Mary's case the teachers in her building did not have much information about what she was doing, and so perceived that she spent a good deal of her time working under administrative prerogative, rather than in developing a program designed to strengthen their own instructional experimentation. Ted, however, was perceived by teachers as interested in the same things they were—teaching kids. As a result, his colleagues supported his position and his work more wholeheartedly.

  The issue here is not who needs support more because both teaching and administrating are tremendously demanding jobs. The issue is the clarity with which positions are created, designed, and then implemented. It would appear that there is a great deal of room for both leadership positions which help to prepare teachers to become administrators and positions which provide instructional guidance for teachers.

- **Teachers and Principals: Building the Skills of Collaboration**

  All of the teachers in this study indicated that it was impossible for them to do their work without the support of their administrators. At the same time, the administrators appeared to value the work done because they provided support or removed road blocks. Ted's administrators allowed him to create the school-within-a-school. Mary's administrators allowed her to revise her leadership position. Gwen's principal believed that the leadership model they had in place was very powerful. And yet her unwillingness to share the decision-making about the role or her duties weakened Gwen's position considerably. Thus it would seem that teacher leaders and principals need to build the skills of collaboration, or sharing decision-making in order to make these roles as powerful as they might be.

## Paradoxes

The dilemmas inherent in these teacher leadership positions lead to several challenging paradoxes. These paradoxes are perhaps more difficult because they demonstrate the contradictory nature of the desire to improve schools while maintaining things the way they are now. Because these paradoxes are largely unexplored, they are illustrated here through a variety of the questions they raise.

- **Shared Leadership in Hierarchical Systems?**

  The whole discussion of teacher leadership is based on the assumption that teachers need to be more involved in the improvement of schools. This means that they must have more decision-making capability. And yet, as Gwen's case so clearly illustrated, teacher leadership exists in the midst of hierarchical systems. Most schools are organized bureaucratically with hierarchical decision-making structures which facilitate efficiency and productivity. Will it be possible to create shared leadership opportunities for teachers in the midst of hierarchies? Does it mean that teacher leaders with have to report to their superiors for clearance or censorship of their ideas? What would have happened to Ted's program had that been the case? What changes will be necessary to create systems which are better able to support a broader base of leadership?

- **Teacher Leadership: Overt versus Covert Behaviors**

  In all the cases of teacher leadership analyzed in this study, examples of the paradox of overt versus covert behaviors surfaced. In both Mary's and Gwen's cases, the examples were the most obvious. Their colleagues appeared to support their work, yet covertly found it meaningless, or insulting, or problematic. In all cases, the overt sanction and the covert resistance did not allow for the kind of honest assessment and the consequential redesign of these positions which might have made them far more powerful.

- **Are Teachers Willing to Learn from their Colleagues?**

  It is ironic that in the profession which is directed to foster a love of learning throughout life, teachers appear to have such a difficult time learning from their colleagues. It would seem that the egalitarian ethos of teaching—the fact that all teachers hold equal position and rank, separated only by numbers of years of experience—makes it problematic for teachers to perceive their colleagues as experts. While Ted found it possible to influence teachers outside his own school, he had little effect where he worked. While Mary found respect from teachers in other districts, her colleagues indicated that she was unable to influence their practice. While Gwen taught courses for teachers from throughout the district, she frequently mentioned that she did not know how much effect she had on her fellow staff members. What are the circumstances which would make it possible for teachers to learn from one another? What kinds of roles or

structural changes would have to be created in order to affect the immediate, local, collegial team? What kind of culture needs to be in place to support teachers so that they can recognize their peers and learn from them?

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

This report on a three-case study of teacher leadership reveals that there are a number of themes, dilemmas and paradoxes which are implicit in the existing positions. Clearly, as an exploratory work, the findings suggest that there is a great deal more to be learned. Further investigation of these emerging issues should help to narrow the gap between the current rhetoric and the possibilities for real practice.

### The Need for Further Research

Before either practitioners or policy-makers can determine what should be done to build stronger teacher leadership positions, the following research should help clarify what is needed:

- A broader collection of cases which investigate other models of teacher leadership and which might build on and add to the themes, dilemmas and paradoxes which surfaced here.
- An examination of models which exhibit well supported collegial settings. What are the characteristics? Who does what? How?
- An examination of the implications of shared decision-making, and the tensions and dilemmas which arise for both teachers and principals as a result?
- An investigation of both NEA's position on teacher leadership and the AFT's position.
- A focused study on the different kinds of collegiality; the underlying assumptions of those; and the rewards, the tensions and the implications for both parties involved.
- A review of other kinds of organizational structures. What options do schools have in experimenting with shared decision-making and non-hierarchical structures?

- An investigation of ways in which policy-makers, educational researchers, and practitioners might work more closely together for more meaningful collaborations.

## The Need for Experimentation in Practice

No other voice will prove stronger in the positive institutionalization of teacher leadership than the voices of teachers themselves. Thus it seems appropriate to call on teachers to join together with others who wish to improve the quality of both the profession and the experience of their students. Teachers commonly meet in local district association meetings, in faculty meetings, in department meetings, and in university classes. Any of these settings, in addition to others, could provide the collaborative forum for teachers to design ways to work together. Information about the following topics related to teacher leadership would prove helpful:

- How do teachers define teacher leadership?
- What are the underlying assumptions which provide the philosophical framework for the leadership positions which exist in schools? Are these roles helpful? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What kinds of leadership roles would attract good teachers, and retain excellent teachers while simultaneously improving practice?
- What are the burdens and the benefits of leading? How are these different in different kinds of collaborations? In Mentoring? In Partnering?
- How do teachers and principals organize school schedules to allow for collegial time? What are the costs? How are the benefits measured?

Clearly, teacher leadership is a complex issue. New Leadership positions have been called for in the recent reform literature. These calls are based on research which would indicate that teachers are an untapped resource, full of expertise, and badly needed to strengthen the profession. And yet, practitioners find the calls for these new roles confusing. Practitioners around the country currently fill leadership positions, many of which involve the same kinds of activities indicated in the reform reports.

The present study was undertaken to better understand the existing roles in order to better articulate the strengths and the weaknesses of these positions and to determine what these positions might tell us about the creation of new positions. Based on case studies of three teachers in very different leadership roles in different settings across the country, it would appear that teacher leadership, as it currently exists, can provide a wealth of information for those interested in creating a stronger teaching profession and better schools for students. The themes, dilemmas, and paradoxes which emerged would indicate that teacher leadership, as a means by which to improve the quality of schooling, is ripe and full of potential. At the same time, embedded in the context of individual schools, of national associations, or of local universities, teacher leadership is complex and cannot be

instituted by legislators, or by well meaning principals, or even by individual, innovative teachers. The entire educational community must work together to encourage much greater teacher participation in the dreaming, the creation, the selection, the implementation, and the evaluation both of roles which already exist and of those which might be created.

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